

THE WASHINGTON POST

Beret Admits Killing Agent On CIA Order

BLOOMFIELD, N. J., April 3 (AP) — Robert F. Marasco, a former captain in the U. S. Special Forces in Vietnam, said tonight he shot and killed a South Vietnamese double agent two years ago — a slaying he and others were accused of but never tried for.

The execution was carried out at the behest of the Central Intelligence Agency and with the knowledge of "our chain of command," Marasco said.

He said he shot the man twice in the head and, with two other officers, put him into a weighted sack and dumped him from a boat into the South China Sea on June 20, 1969.

Marasco said in a telephone interview that he came forward now, at the risk of prosecution for murder, because of his anger over the court-martial of Lt. William L. Calley Jr.

He said he killed the agent because "of orders that were given to me—orders that I felt were legal orders."

Marasco and seven others, including the Green Berets' commander in Vietnam, Col. Robert B. Rheault, were accused by the Army of the slaying. The Army later dropped the charges, saying it did so because it was told that the CIA would not permit any of its men to testify at a trial.

Marasco, now 29, and in the insurance business, left the service in October, 1969.

While out of reach now of military prosecution, Marasco said, "I'm open to having the charges brought against me again by civilian authority. That potential was always there. There is no statute of limitation."

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"Over the last year and a half I've wanted to release this information," he said. He got conflicting advice from lawyers, he said, but decided to speak because of "the Calley thing."

"Not Calley himself," said Marasco, "but the Calley thing—all the others who could follow him. This Calley thing should be the last one."

Neither Calley, he said, nor any other soldiers should be made to stand trial for acts performed under orders and the necessities of duty.

The agent he killed, Thai Khac Chuyen, was discovered to be a double agent when a captured Vietcong site yielded a photograph of Chuyen with a North Vietnamese general, Marasco said.

Later, it was determined that his true allegiance was to what Marasco identified as "The Third Force," a mostly South Vietnamese organization striving to set up a Communist-desired coalition government in Saigon, he said.

"He was my agent and it was my responsibility to eliminate him with extreme prejudice," said Marasco, adding that the last expression meant to kill Chuyen.

He said the execution order, never explicit, came from a CIA operative who said: "We cannot officially sanction it, but elimination is your best course of action."

Marasco continued: "When someone in the CIA says to you 'your best course of action is elimination,' that means, 'we approve it.'"

The former captain said he estimated conservatively that hundreds of summary executions were carried out in South Vietnam, most of them by a CIA-trained and -financed Vietnamese assassination squad called the Provincial Reconnaissance Unit.

Marasco said Chuyen was first drugged with morphine and then put aboard a motorboat the night that he shot him twice in the head with a .22-caliber gun equipped with silencer. A mail sack weighted with chains and tire rims was his final shroud and he was pushed over into the sea by Marasco and two other officers, Marasco said.

Executing Chuyen, he said, was a job that had to be done and he said he was extremely resentful that he ever was charged with the slaying.

"Maybe our people have learned this Calley thing should be the last one," he said, "and that's why I'm telling this now. My decision was based on my principles, my love for my country, for what it stands for and what it was built for."

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10. (Unclassified - GLC) Hand carried to Scott Cohen, on the staff of Senator Charles Percy (R., Ill.), an ^{STATINTL} [REDACTED] item commenting on the Senator's recent travel.

11. (Unclassified - GLC) Hand carried to Senator Mike Mansfield's (D., Mont.) office several FBIS items on the Senator's recent trip to the Far East.

12. (Secret - GLC) Hand carried to Mr. Ed Braswell, on the staff of the Senate Armed Services Committee, a Moscow Tass commentary on Senator Stennis' management of the military procurement bill now pending in the Senate.

Mr. Braswell mentioned that Senator Symington had talked with him recently about the Green Beret case. The Senator expressed a view that the Agency was getting a bad name in connection with this case and he thought the Director should be asked to brief the CIA Subcommittees on this case so they might be of some assistance to us. I advised Braswell of the Director's briefing of the Senate Appropriations CIA Subcommittee and told him that the Director was seeing Senator Symington today and this would undoubtedly come up during the course of conversation.

I also briefed Mr. Braswell on the status of our negotiations on S. 782. I queried Braswell on the Daniels bill. Braswell said he was quite certain that the bill would pass the Senate in some form but he feels sure that the income tax provision will be deleted from the bill on a point of order.

13. (Secret - GLC) Met briefly with Bill Woodruff, on the staff of the Senate Appropriations Committee, and advised him of my conversation with Ed Braswell regarding the Director's appearance before the Senate Appropriations CIA Subcommittee. Woodruff saw no problem with this.

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Legislative Counsel

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